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ABSTRACT

As part of an effort to investigate the impact of the increasing predominance of part-time, adult, community college students on the management and organization of the continuing education function, a survey of the 106 California community colleges was conducted in Spring 1979 to determine how many had merged the administration of the day college with that of the evening college, or with the continuing education function. Survey findings, based on a 75% response rate, revealed that 32 of the responding colleges had recently placed both the continuing education function and the day college under the authority of the Dean of Instruction, six other colleges had completed mergers under slightly different designs, and five reported that merger plans were under serious consideration. Of the remaining colleges, 26 had never separated the administration of these functions in the first place, and ten indicated that the split organizational design was working well and would remain in operation. The 36 colleges that had merged the day and evening college administrations tended to be large institutions; those that had never had separate program administrations tended to be smaller and were more often in rural areas. Evening students represented approximately the same proportion of the enrollments of both of these groups. (JP)

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CONTINUING EDUCATION MERGERS:

The Results of a Community College Reorganization Survey

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Continuing Education Mergers:

The Results of a Community College Reorganization Survey

This is a particularly interesting time to study the organization and administration of continuing education programs in California's Community Colleges. Enrollments have changed dramatically in the last ten years. Through the sixties and into the early seventies the dominant enrollment pattern indicated that about two-thirds of the students attended California Community Colleges during the day, and carried half to full-time credit loads. Now that pattern has been reversed; up to two-thirds of the students are attending the typical community college in the evening and taking one or two courses.

As early as 1975, the California Post-secondary Commission declared that continuing education for the part-time adult student was the dominant function of the community college. The majority of this state's community colleges were not designed and organized with part-time continuing education adult students in mind as the primary function. The background of the organization and development of the state's junior and then later, community colleges shows the evening part-time adult, and later continuing education students, were served by an adjunct part of the organization which provided a limited set of services. Typically, one administrator ran the entire evening program with autonomy. This autonomy was really the result of the evening programs' relative lack of importance or visibility, as opposed to the daytime operation of the college. This freedom often allowed the evening manager to arrange for off-campus sites, schedule programs, and create new courses upon demand with little thought to the day college structure and its sundry standing committees.

Given the increase in these part-time enrollments and the market sensitive nature of California's community college organizations, some organizational changes might well be anticipated, that bring these adjunctive evening programs into the mainstream of the college's organization.

My doctoral studies at Stanford University are concerned with the impact of the shift in enrollments from largely day full-time students to a majority of part-time continuing education students on the organization of California Community Colleges. As part of this study, I designed a brief, one-page survey instrument which I hoped would give some indication of how the organization and management of continuing education programs is changing. Specifically, I was interested in how many colleges had merged the day college with the evening college, or with the continuing education function. Many community colleges in California are or were divided into two organizations. The day college has a complex administrative structure with several deans and associate deans and several standing committees. The evening organization has a simple structure. Typically, one dean manages the entire program with the help of a couple of assistants. Often this dean, like the Dean of Instruction, reports directly to the President. Now, with the shift in enrollment to the evening, it may be significant to see how many colleges consolidate or merge the evening program back under the Dean of Instruction in a one college day and evening organizational structure.

ACCCA mailed a survey to each community college in California, 106 at that time. Seventy-nine surveys were returned, a response rate of 75%. This was a good response rate, due, I think, to the wide support which ACCCA enjoys, the use of a very short survey instrument, and an interest in the subject of continuing education organization and management heading the mergers.

The Results

Of the 79 colleges responding, 32 (41%) indicated that they had merged the day and evening classes together under one dean or vice president of instruction, and that each academic department was responsible for the entire program day and evening. Six other colleges reported that mergers had been accomplished, but with slightly different designs. Five additional institutions reported that merger plans were being seriously discussed. In sum, 43 California community colleges, 55% of the total response, had either recently merged the day and evening programs, or were seriously considering doing so. Twenty-six colleges (33%) reported no need to merge, since they had never separated continuing education out from the main organization. Ten colleges stated that no mergers were being considered and that the split organizational design was working well.

The movement toward the merger of day and evening or continuing education programs appears to be pervasive. If the colleges which never divided the two functions were subtracted from the total responding, it leaves a remainder of 55. Therefore, 38 (69%) of the community colleges which had a split organizational design have merged day and evening programs together.

Institutional Characteristics

Most of these merged community colleges are fairly large. Just under 40% of these colleges have enrollments of over 15,000 students or less. All are characterized by large evening part-time attendance. An average of 45% of the enrollment at these colleges is in the evening; the actual range is from a low of 24% to a high of 68% of students enrolled in evening continuing

education programs. Daytime students tend to carry more units of course work each semester of quarter. Thus a comparison of A.D.A. generated in the day as opposed to the evening shows that an average of 33% of the A.D.A. is generated in the evening at these 38 community colleges. Fifty-seven percent of this group of colleges reported growth or strong growth in both their evening and off-campus course offerings.

One way to determine what is important to an organization is to analyze what it keeps track of, to study the manner in which records are kept. For example, 79% of the group of 38 community colleges which have recently merged day and evening programs keep records of day and evening enrollments and of the consequent A.D.A. generated by each segment. By contrast, only 28% of the community colleges in the group of 24 which never separated the day and evening programs, maintained separate enrollment statistics for the day and evening, which were easily accessable.

The 24 community colleges which never separated day and evening administrations share different characteristics than the merged group. More of these colleges are in less populated locations. Ten of this group are in rural locations as opposed to only three rural colleges in the other group. Similarly, of the thirty-eight merged colleges, only four enroll 5,000 or less, compared with nine out of twenty-four of the second group. Thus, the twenty-four community colleges responding to the survey which had not separated thier evening and day administrations tended to be more rural and to have smaller enrollments. But, at the same time, evening enrollments were proportionately as large as those of the first group. An average of 48% of the enrollments in the second group of colleges are in evening classes.

The ten responding community colleges which reported no plans to

merge the day and evening administration were not unusual in any of their group characteristics. There would appear to be no common explanation as to why these colleges choose to maintain separate day and evening organizations. A few noted that it was senseless to tinker with something that worked.

Conclusion

Of the seventy-nine California community colleges that responded to the survey, thirty-two have brought the continuing education function into the mainstream of the colleges' organizational structure. All programs, day and evening, are under the Dean of Instruction; academic and occupational departments now control the courses and curricula day and evening. These mergers were brought about by a change in the environment in which these organizations functioned. Since community colleges are tied to their communities through the community college finance system, it was predictable that the colleges would change organizationally as the community's needs and wants changed. Services to adult and continuing education students have been increasing and will continue to increase. Evening program managers are now included in the decision making process of these colleges. It will be interesting to see if these evening campus and off-campus managers lose some measure of the organizational autonomy and freedom which they once enjoyed as an adjunct part of the college organization. I suspect they will.

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